DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 162 295 CS 004 506

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TITLE But What Do You Do with an Aide...A Tutor...A Parent?
PUB DATE [78]
NOTE 10p.; Guide prepared at Southwest Texas State University

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Paraprofessional School Personnel; Parent Participation; Primary Education; *Reading Instruction; *Teacher Aides; Tutors; *Volunteers

ABSTRACT

Paid or volunteer assistants can help a teacher in several ways. They can give students positive reinforcement and can help them correct their work. Assistants can also perform specific tutorial tasks including directing oral reading, assisting with phonics and sight vocabulary, and helping students improve their comprehension. (TJ)

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ED162295

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"BUT WHAT DO YOU DO WITH AN AIDE. . .A TUTOR. . .A PARENT?"

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"BUT WHAT DO YOU DO WITH AN AIDE. . .A TUTOR. . .A PARENT?"

If there is anything more discouraging for a reading teacher than having too many children and too little time, it is having a paid or volunteer assistant who must be constantly monitored or told what to do.

Most classroom teachers, on first reaction, would leap at the opportunity to have a parent or paraprofessional assist with the many tasks connected with reading instruction. However, after trying an aide, many teachers have told me they would rather not have help because having to think up suitable activities for aides is very time-consuming. Furthermore, teachers find that sometimes aides do individual children more harm than good.

The following suggestions have grown out of my consultant activities as I have endeavored to help teachers and aides work together harmoniously to develop better readers.

A GUIDE FOR READING TUTORS

Although you are not a professional teacher, you have a special position in the classroom and can make a significant contribution to the teaching of reading. As a non-professional, you will generally not select reading materials, nor will you decide at what grade level a child reads. Only the teacher is qualified to do these.

On the other hand, you will have many of the same responsibilities as teachers. For example, you will need to establish a warm, friendly but businesslike relationship with each child you tutor. You will need to be firm but kind as you try to keep children "on task." You will also need to have some type of record-keeping system, so that you can communicate to the teacher just how much progress pupils are making in learning to read better.

Because you are working in the school, you may occasionally hear or see confidential information about pupils. Please be discreet! Do not discuss this information outside of the school setting.

Many of the children that you will work with will be having difficulty learning to read. These children usually are concerned about their lack of skills; some of them even consider themselves "dumb." Consequently, you will do well to omit statements like "No, that's wrong" from your vocabulary entirely. You can best help children by recognizing and calling attention to the correct responses they make, but say nothing negative about errors. Whenever a pupil gives an appropriate or correct answer to a question you ask or performs well a task you have given, say something like one of these:

Yes, that's right!
Good for you.
Wow!
I like your work.
You've got it now.
Good thinking.
Good job.
Terrific!
Right on!
Far out!

This does not mean that you accept inaccuracies in work. If the pupil gives an incorrect answer to a question, repeat the question or ask it another way. The pupil will soon learn that when you repeat your question, the previous response was not quite right.

When errors are made in written work, show the pupil where the error is, then do one of two things: 1) Tell the pupil the answer is incorrect and ask him/her to redo it, or 2) tell the pupil how the answer is incorrect and ask him/her to redo it. After the correct answer has been written, ask the pupil to tell you how the first answer was wrong and why the last one was correct. Then, give lavish praise for a job well done!

Information About Reading

Reading is a series of complicated and interlocking behaviors, and, contrary to popular opinion, learning to read is difficult. Bond and Tinker have described reading by saying:

> Reading involves the recognition of printed or written symbols which serve as stimuli for the recall of meanings built up through the reader's past experience.(1)

This implies that reading involves three areas:

1. Past experiences
2. Accurate response to print
3. Getting meaning from what is read

As a tutor, you will not be able to do much about number 1, but you will be working a great deal on 2 and 3. Making an accurate response to print is what teachers call "word recognition skills," and getting meaning from what is read is called "comprehension." These two main areas of instruction can be further described as:

Vocabulary
- word meanings
- "sight" words (high speed recognition of whole units)

Word Recognition
- phonics
- structural analysis (dividing long words into syllables so they may be said)
- use of context (recognizing a new word because of the way it is used in a sentence)
- use of the dictionary

Comprehension
- understanding the meaning of words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs and longer passages
- identifying and stating the main idea
- locating important details
- following written directions
- locating answers to questions
- making generalizations and drawing conclusions
- predicting outcomes
- using study skills
- making critical evaluations or judgments

Tutoring Tasks

There will be many ways for you to help the teacher to teach reading. Sometimes the teacher will tell you exactly what to do and how to do it; at other times the teacher will tell you to help a certain child and use materials she will indicate, but she will not tell you exactly how to teach. These suggestions are for those occasions. Each tutoring task described here is based on proven teaching techniques.

Oral Reading

One of the best ways tutors can assist teachers in the reading program is by listening to pupils read aloud. Most teachers have too many pupils and too many different tasks to spend a great deal of time listening to oral reading. On the other hand, beginning readers or readers who are having trouble learning to read need many opportunities to practice reading. One way to provide this practice is to have them read aloud.

During the time the pupil is reading, he/she may encounter an unfamiliar word. The tutor should say, "Finish the sentence." After the sentence has been completed, if the pupil cannot guess what word is needed to make sense, the tutor should print the word on a piece of paper, then point to it and say, "Point to this word, here in the book," while pointing to the sentence in which the unfamiliar word is located. After the pupil points to the word in the sentence, the tutor should say, "What is that word?" If the pupil cannot answer correctly, the tutor says, "Look at the word. This word is _____. Now you say it." Then, pointing to the beginning of the sentence in which the word is located, say, "Now read this sentence." When the new word is correctly read in the context of the sentence, praise the pupil and say, "Go on reading."(2)

Repeat this process every time an unfamiliar word is encountered.

After the oral reading is completed, use some techniques for further study of the words which the reader missed.

Another oral reading activity can be used to give the pupil lots of practice on the same material. Select a short passage: use one or two pages for very young children and three or four for older pupils. Following the procedures described above, have the pupil read the passage aloud. Then have him/her read the same material over again but silently this time; next have the pupil read the same material aloud once more.

Phonics and Sight Vocabulary

Teach children the sounds that consonant alphabet letters stand for by having key pictures or key words for each one. For example, have a picture of a ball for the sound Bb stands for.

Vowels can best be taught within short words. For example, teach the short vowel sounds through words like cat for ă, let for ĕ, sit for ĭ, hot for ŏ, and cut for ŭ. For long vowel sounds use words like mate for ā, beet for ē, time for ī, rope for ō, tube for ū.

Give pupils a great deal of practice using timed drills on "spelling patterns." You can use a stopwatch or the second hand on the classroom clock for this. Print lists of short words on charts, cards, ditto sheets or on the chalkboard. Use common spelling patterns like these:

__an	__in	__at	ba__	sa__	___ack	___ate	___oat
ban	fin	bat	bad	sad	black	crate	boat
fan	pin	cat	bam	sam	clack	grate	coat
man	tin	fat	bat	sat	crack	slate	goat
tan	sin	mat	bag	sag	track	plate	moat
		sat					

Provide practice, including timing, on sight vocabulary. The teacher will give you a list of the words to use. These should be words which the teacher has already taught; this activity is merely to give additional practice on words which the child knows in order to increase speed of recognition.

Print or write the words on cards about 3" x 8"; present the cards in rapid sequence. This type of drill can be made into a game.

Some children need a special type of practice in order to master sight words. This practice is called "kinesthetic." Print or write the words as above. Present one card at a time to the child by placing it on the desk in front of him/her. Require the pupil to use the index finger to trace over the letters, saying the word syllable by syllable. The tracing should be done about five times. Then turn the card face down and ask the pupil to write it from memory just the way it was practiced, syllable by syllable. Turn the card over and have the pupil check his work. Continue this type of practice until the word can be correctly written on three consecutive days, then add this word card to a packet for further timed drill.

Comprehension

After the pupil has read, silently or orally, a passage, ask him/her to close the book and retell the information or story in his/her own words. If the pupil omits important information or if the story is recalled in incorrect sequence, ask the pupil to read the passage again.

To use ReQuest procedures, you will need two copies of the material to be read. You read the material to yourself as the pupil reads either silently or orally. When both of you are finished, you ask the pupil two or three questions, then the pupil has a turn and asks you two or three questions. This procedure is fun for both; it also helps the child focus attention on the material, so that he/she can later ask suitable questions. If ReQuest procedures are used for several successive lessons, the pupil will usually show marked improvement in comprehension--and in ability to ask and answer questions.

To guide thinking, teachers (and tutors) ask many questions. To help a pupil gain more information from a passage, ask the same questions both before and after the child reads. The questions can be either written or oral. Ask questions which begin like these:

What. . .?	When. . .?	Why. . .?
Who. . .?	How. . .?	What if. . .?

Pupils above third grade may need some tutoring on how to take notes during reading, especially if the material to be read is factual, as in social studies or science books. Show the pupil how to outline factual information. Use a simple outline form:

I. Main Idea
   A. Supporting fact
   B. Supporting fact
II. Main Idea
   A.
   B.

The first time an outline is taught, you write the outline on something both you and the pupil have read. Then, both of you read another passage and you assist the pupil to make a simple outline. Through questions, help him/her identify and write down the main ideas and important supporting facts.

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2. Ellson, D. G., Phillip Harris and Larry Barber. "A Field Test of Programmed and Directed Tutoring," Reading Research Quarterly, Volume 3, Number 3, Spring, 1968, see pp. 351-355.